

o·blēk

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²oblique (*o·blēk*) *n.* **1:** An oblique line **2:** *Anat.* An oblique muscle **3:** *Gram.* An oblique case **4:** *Nav.* In maneuvering, a change of course of less than 90 degrees

o·blēk/2

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Frontispiece by Barbieo, Shaman Village, Woodcut, 1983

Cover by Barbieo, Untitled, Watercolor, 1987

OPENING POEM

Here I will say it, but it keeps leaving me. Here I will parry with elbow of monk. Here I will return from the moon, but there's a catch to any catch of light. Holds that revolve 'round the spineless mind as the straps fall from the body of dreams nights. There's a yellow patina on the plastered leg that wasn't shown before. Liars are we all so bodied to our constituency, of a reduced gold the moon stained a pillar for our hollowed young love. And where I had wedgewood it had better said wormwood, the flavors of a drowntable blackstar abutment on coils of essence and fingers tapping gall. The Latin is divided on this point.

from *MINE: the one that enters the stories*
by Clark Coolidge

RAE ARMANTROUT

NO MATTER
BASES
OCTOBER

NO MATTER

First person
is relative
placement of the phantom
limbs and organs, a holding
pattern which rises
and sinks from sight
to suit me.

I like the play
of light because
it touches me
and doesn't;
it stimulates
the way I feign being
touched and turning over,
(in my grave)
rustling.

BASES

Birds in flight switch places above and below a hypothetical bar — like a visual trill — though imitation is vulgar.

The idea that each individual is a unique strain: weight and counter-weight in the organization of memory. So many forms representing, presumably, a few wishes.

Chew the fat in order to spill the milk, in other words, from which the self-same woman emerges.

What the cool tomato cubes forming a rosette around this central olive have to do with love and happiness.

Thrilled to elaborate some striking variant of what we imagine to be a general, if fabricated, condition.

Two men on the street wax their teal-green, 50's Mercury.

She thinks the two are lovers, but you say you disagree. Now she's angry either because you mimic, or because you merely mimic, ignorance of such things.

She uses intercourse to symbolize persuasion.

Old people never appear to have reserved judgment in the manner of a posted beauty.

She dreamed the ill were allowed to wander at ease through the reconstructed, but vacant, Indian village.

Her eyes scanning the near range with a feeble sense of their being like children sledding, though never having done that adds a campiness to the “Whoo-ee” of “I see.”

You’re not crying because you can’t find the thing you made, but because she won’t help. She won’t because she’s comfortable, reading — but not really because now you’ve stuck your head behind her shoulder sobbing and pretending to gasp. She goes away to pick up your clothes, but also to see if she can find the thing you want. You tell her it looks like a crab. While she’s gone you find it underneath her chair. You insist, bitterly, that you knew where it was all along; you were just testing her ability to see. It’s like keeping her eye on a bouncing dot. She says either you’re lying now or you were lying before when you were sobbing for it and needed her help. Really she thinks you were lying both times, all along, but not exactly.

Now the news is of polls which measure our reactions to duplicity.

She puts her tongue to the small hole, imitating accuracy.

OCTOBER

Beauty appeals

like a cry

for help

that's distant

or inhuman

so foreclosed.

We say

“ablaze”

because we can't stand it:

red and yellow

nearing

or nearly turning

toward

DALLAS WIEBE

ORACLES

I: FILLING BUCKETS WITH BREATH

Sixty-four starlings
 and three squirrels
Speaking of corn and barrels
 of suet.
Yellow eyes in the box elder.
Blue stomachs in the spirea.
Black feet by the pussy willow.
No, Dante did not spread
 false lumber.
Nor did Eisenhower board up navels.
Nor did Pilate nail up
 the mother of shingles.
Sirius, sweet twinkle,
 roll up your Levi's
 and wade with cranes
 into the brook called "Fancy."
Cuddle with the crawdads.
Splash with their tantrums.
When the wind blows too
 onto the Cadillacs,
When the rain falls also
 under "My Old Kentucky Home,"

When the snow yet crawls
 into Nepal,
The 144,000 minnows
 in your furnace
 shall read books
 that outline
 the history
 of bricks.

II: IF A MAN COULD SEE HIS CECUM

Killed thumbs in the split pea soup.
Curled eyeballs in the sauerkraut.
Blackened brains in the bread.
You told three lies;
Your dad was not lost
 in the Cottonwood River.
That horse you predicted
 was yellowish-green
And the oryx
 ran the disco.
The wind was like,
The rain was like,
The grass was like,

Algol in the T-Bird mirror
was like.
And you whispered,
 “Goodnight, Irene.”
You are loved like a radish
And you came about.
A mom asked,
 “Who was that silver brat?”
And you, sisters of boards,
 “How could you?”
You let the dog drown
 because you feared the railings
 around the waters of Shiloh,
 the stems on the Ark,
 the beards on the cherubim.
Von Paulus counted his lilies
 while Russian tanks
 kicked up plumes of snow,
 ice, blood and snails.
Put stilts on the cows
And milk them from a ladder.
Oh, these leaking pens.
Help them, van Gogh,
For they have written,
 “Hungry clouds swag on the deep.”

III: BREVITY SAVES TIME

Young green oxen in white grass,
Standing as quietly
 as a gun in Tibet.
Old egrets and young pelicans
 frolic, flapping
 beside the still waters.
Red mice gnawing elastic.
Liver. Kidneys. Spleen.
Black shoes. Six toes.
Zhukov's zinnias wilted
 below the Messerschmitts.
Eyebrows laundered
 in "the gambler he broke even."
Mary crawling in the straw.
Yea, you are troubled by three,
 Nay, four, braggarts:
 the hangman sucking his rope,
 the Stetson tilted towards Arcturus,
 a Trans Am squealing for blood
 and Füessli's left eye lurching
 towards an emerald crown.

IV: TRANSCENDING WILD RICE

Black two-by-fours sit on the divan
where sister Lily
wrecked her Pinto.

They smile
and thank the Lord
for nails.

Seven snails applaud the Rolling Stones.

Downwind, a pink spaniel
poses for Velazquez

And the broken back
of the fat-lipped king
squeaks as he bows
to Aldebaran.

Just to prove
thank God for spokes.

Just to say
thank Zeus for rakes.

Just to hope
thank Yahweh for yoghurt.

Ripples on ripples
in Louisiana.

Eyes of salamanders
in the drippings.

Fingernails of angels
in the dust.

Caesar would rather change horses
 than beat a drum.
Hitler chopped onions
 with a club.
They'd better flay oaks
 in a barrel
 or the flounders will fly,
 the sabers dance,
 the golden scales flitter
Into the wild rice
 on your brain.

V: PILING ON THE DOWN

Light pluck and the scarf falls.
Third pick and the hole grows.
Open bucket and Egypt boils.
Flames from brown candles
 and carbon monoxide from Chevrolets.
Why not answer that daily bell?
Jelly-faced girl,
Put full power into your suck,
Ride up the blue joints,
Fancy yourself falling
 into soft fat.

Oh Naphtali,
Put the green apple in the clay pot.
Mommy never loved a shin,
Daddy never shanked blood
And sister never dreamed
 of a white Magritte.
How scary the skin;
How rigid the toe.

Flags of all nations
 bending to the limp
 of cannon.
Self-indulgence
 with bayonets and bombs.

Discovering that he was lost,
Alexander prayed to the sands
Who answered with largos
 on sauerkraut.
Coming to a dry river,
Caesar knelt in the dust
 and cursed the cabbage.
Leaning on a black eagle,
Ivan sang a ditty
 about ink, corsets and Betelgeuse.

Lest we forget the hyssop,
Lest we lose our jugs,
Lest we strike a match,
Hosannas to coffins,
Hoorays to graves,
Yah-hoos to stiff.

VI: I CAN'T BELCH

Uppermost in your mind:
Polar bears are gallbladders
 lost in the supermarkets.
Cans of French-cut green beans.
Jars of chartreuse mayonnaise.
Boxes of turquoise Wheaties.
Cottontails are sphincters
 lost on the freeways.
Colt, Duster and Mustang.
Mice are colons
 lost in the missile silos.
MIRV, Minuteman, ICBM.
"Soft o'er the fountain ling'ring falls."

You Beach Boys,
And you, Dietrich Buxtehude,
And you, jumping Jehoshaphat,
You, lost in a grain of sand,
You, eyeballing Regulus,
Speak up for box turtles,
Yell out for salamanders,
Bellow recitatives for carp,
“Huzzah, selah and wowee.”

Germans, Italians, Frenchmen,
You, lost in your syllables,
And you, Serbo-Croatians, Macedonians,
And you, Hunkpappa Sioux,
 lost in your tongues,
And you Manxmen, Thais and Turkomans,
 lost in your sentences.
And you with the pet wolverine,
You with the trained hippo,
And you with the obedient rattler,
And you with the Hotchkiss machine gun,
And you with the tomatoes,
And you, and you,
 and you.

VII: LURCHING ALONG THE WABASH

Eternal in your ear:
Jesus walks in the sink
 where you spit
And says
 that the drain
 is his disciple.
Mary, with the moles
 on her giblets,
 turns on the gas
And wishes the Munchkins
 a happy Halloween.
At the Albee Theater
 an ax murderer
 finds religion
 during “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.”
When Capella rises
Judas loves the little children
And blows his nose
 on their skin.
We are not Vandals.
We are not Romans.
We are not Americans.
You can’t be free
 in a frozen pond.

Lie down, Arcimboldo,
 your head in the clods.
Lie down, Lhasa sits solitary.
Lie down, in the place of skulls.
When he was a little boy.
She'll never forget.
They were digging.
Spit. Belch. Whistle.
They were singing,
"Way down upon the Suwannee."
They were scraping their Pacers,
Painting portraits of Rommel.
God is not a sewer.
A church is not a furnace.
A street is not a wire.
How can the asphalt
 conceive the Eland?
How can the concrete
 abort the rock?
How can the bricks
 raise Cain?
Burst is the way,
 the force and the strife.
No man drums
 on his rocker.

VIII: COURTING THE LONE RANGER

In the beginning:
A god in time
 saves none,
A poet saved
 is a poet burned
And Rodin and his mold
 are soon parted.
Down in the alley
 where the green grass dozes.
Up in the heavens beyond Alphard
 where the silver is refined.
Out on the Plain of Tibias
 where the chalice fumes.
Carry her back to old Virginny
And she will dodge
 the bumpers on the Potomac.
Hold him
And he will caress the huckleberries.
Drop it
And it will tickle
 the carburetors of white-tails.

Stations of loss.
Seven last absurdities.
The ten resentments.
The twelve disgusts.
The lost tribes of misery.

The moose knows
the way of Pink Floyd.

The elk knows
the path of Adidas.

The deer knows
the road to the Toyota.

Who has walked through the valleys
of the cannon

And heard the arias
of the machine guns.

Do not bow down, music,
to the firing pins.

Do not suckle
the hot barrels
of the pistols.

Do not finger
the red treads
of the tanks.

IX: HEAVING UP THE PLEIADES

Snockerred. Gash. Bread.
Four things, nay three,
 are a blindman's mystery:
 running pus, peanut butter pie
 and a cold candle.
Or saliva by the barrel,
Urine by the tank car
And a river
 of "Number nine, number nine, number nine."
Or a lamb,
 a forest
 and a broken heart.
Palma Christi, greyhounds
 and the squirting cucumber.
Packs of jackals by the Jordan.
Desire in the Negev.
Limestone by Gomorrah.
The wings of the lion
 shield the throne.
The leather on Tonto
 holds the legs.
The fenders on Datsuns
 take the rising Rigel.
When Jezebel bled
 the chariot rolled off.

When the lions roared
 the Christians sighed.
When the Russians died
 we counted our change.
Ax. Hoe. Shroud.
Lizard. Snail. Carp.
Counting the rings
 on the dead fingers of Botticelli
We noticed
 our addition failed.
We subtracted
 the number two.
Heavens, when we calibrate.
Nuts, when we measure.
Phooey, when we count.
Put this word
 in your snarl.

X: TOO MUCH IS NEVER ENOUGH

Golden rings set with tar,
Her silver bracelet
 studded with syrup,
Her copper necklace
 enameled with milk.
His fur eyes, hair nose,
 toenail lips.

Polaris over Rembrandt's house.
Down in the valley
 a cabin filled with graves.
"Mercy me," she said
 when the coyote bit her ear.
A choir of crocks singing,
 "Lullaby on Broadway"
 and "Phooey to the Lord."

Germany attacks the Sahara.
France burns the Niger.
U.S. of A. radiates the Urals.

Lilacs on the black rock.
White bird on the crystal sea.
Four red horses on the silver river.
The thousand voices over the gold mountains.
Eagles in the rain.
Orioles in the dawn.
Cardinals in the snow.
If you put your lungs
 around a hoof
You'll turn in your Chrysler
Like an iron door
 on rusty hinges.

Grace upon the blue moon
And cloven hoofs on dunes.
Right now,
 thrip.

XI: FINDING OUT THAT I HAVE NO WINGS

On the yellow brick road
to the baboon
who lives
in a gingerbread barn.

On the road to the leopard
who brushes his teeth
with morning glories.

On the highway in our Dodge,
speeding toward the giraffe
who squats
on a lemon meringue stool.

Thirst. Hunger. Righteousness.

Pain in the right carpals.

Oh Carpathians crossed by Crusaders.

Oh you Danube bridged by the Huns.

And oh you Black Forest
filled with the ashes
of William Blake.

Shall we not intone
a mass for midgets,
a hymn for hermits,
an oratorio for paraplegics?

And sing our puny little hearts out
all over the floor?

Chant our rough tongues
through the cracks in the wall?

Hum our sore butts
 over the garbage disposal?
“Hello, operator.
Person to person.
Reverse the charges.
Cancel the bill.”
Procyon following Orion
 sings in the cold,
“It’s beginning to look a lot.”
Thermos told the last truths.
Unravel your bones
 before the hog snores.
Unbind your skin
 before the chicken dreams.
Untie your eyes
 before the worm awakens.

XII: THE MARRIAGE OF TWO BASKETS

Diamonds in the ebony sod.
Emeralds in the crystal sea.
Rhinestones in the jade cloud.
You believe in Ezra Pound,
Lay down your arms,
 legs and toes
And follow the shoes of Janice.
Skull, feet and palms.
Lying low under the eucalyptus trees
 the dingoes shall dance.
Bleating in the cabbages,
 the sheep be dipped
 and the elephants be remembered
 in the pines.
What was said
 by the triplets
 in the spring.
What was written
 by the twins
 in the winter.
What was thought
 by the boy
 in the Bel-Air.

Surely he shall sing "Rock of Ages."
Surely he bore our gripes.
Surely he arose on the third tiger.
Once there was,
Twice there are,
Thrice there shall be
 shrimp in the pockets of scholars,
 lobsters in the billfolds of politicians,
 giant squid in the cassocks of priests.
I am was all.
I was shall be
And three and two
 and one and one half,
Yet to be clocked out.
Hide the blinking Alioth.
Jehu jumps on Pike's Peak.
Caesar limps up the wood valley.
U.S. Grant sits out
 the paper plain.

LAURA MORIARTY

THE ENTHUSIAST

I am the King's whore. There is writing on a body spread out under itself blatantly at ease. A huge pillow is realistically given. The pillow is part of the imagined context as are the trees of the park. The yellow sky makes a triangle with the red and blue satin of the robe which falls away. The child is mythological. The large ivory jar in the corner is tufted and fluted in three places and knobbed on the top. A fit jar for a King whose fine lines find consonance with the artful brows and hair of the creature before us. Does she intend to be understood in collaboration with her maker?

These verses were written He was with his patroness The present is close to the original Form being imposed From inside the outside looked the same He depicted the relations between them Women pots and trees His hand his mind These were part of a sacred service They didn't call it religion At the end of the century artists embrace their sovereign The bottom is a baroque form The women of that race Their form and his mind and These verses

How to represent water was one of the questions they were unable to imagine How many dimensions does a word have? She occupies a place occupied by Goddesses and Queens because she is an open secret. The King is here because he came back. What became reinstated was his ability to negotiate with his minions. They have no dimensionality either. The fountain appeared in the middle as an image of plenty. The water appeared as light.

The our desire is increased by difficulty was a tender application

And languished in the circle of his arms Among birds her lover The
centuries old lawn laid out like an award Should you be willing We will
complete the picture Of the arrows she complained Of the ivy crawling
up the walls

He grew horns on his forehead by the power of the imagination We
bring ourselves back to the form The effect upon the man of his beliefs
and estate were thought to be less than we now conceive them to be yet
more than could be controlled At the request of His Majesty she lay
back picturing a woman like herself A movable icon represented every
possible window and door Honeycombed with doubt

The Lady paints a picture A blood red fleur-de-lis extends itself behind
her canvas into the same shape in violet There are creases in the material
to show its substance She creates this voluminous curtain A marble of a
young man whose cloth swathed across his genitals she indicates with a
sweeping gesture (He turns toward her) By her seriousness White rolls
of paint are made to seem like fur There is a ruling pattern which sticks
to her for she is also the model Men with hands above their heads are
shouting or falling

“I have this tremendous amount of story” An artist makes a catalogue
of exchanges She expresses her concern The King’s milk The white col-
lection of blank pages She invests her statement with the enthusiasm she
is famous for She will say

I am the King’s whore Miss O’Murphy’s braid twisted like a halo Dimpled
shoulders Around my heart like a cave Another turning The thing she
planned to do I wish to stay *Tyrranick Love* My troubled hours She
began I wish to go

These verses appear to say they won't But they are willing She thinks and speaks of herself as separate From the forms of her employment But she is familiar with the continuum The mystic double body of the King The false contract A display of citizenship She thinks of herself as a man possessed These verses argue actual practice Conspicuous gallantry Dear Sir Please accept the threat of my existence As the heart you imagine me to have These verses are not a contradiction

How to represent clarity with a viscous medium by adding color Not personal Not troublesome The emeralds did not keep her chaste She used her gifts to create rules of decorum She could have supported a hundred men with her jewelry If tongue be a woman's arms, how dare you imagine any other kind of soldier

That our desire is increased by use An inspirational logic took over Overspilling in fact like the white breasts that were the fashion The shot silk The tender weapons of his august person They stood in a row like rooms off the hall that he owned Everything was made of stone

And languished stability itself which is nothing more than a languid motion The curling iron gate He opened her mouth to kiss He found all manner of activity going on Inside her head The way he talked The metal which characterized the time

When everyone gets to be King and speak this beautiful language The new knowledge will enable them to impress themselves On nature the private subject imposes itself as a function of the willing Monarch They were of an age The child King The child Bride

I am the King's whore I am a singular desire A trophy An adventuress In the sense of withering away The wager was lost as it was made When light drew itself over her visible body it was a symmetrical feast Lasting into the night There was a black garden rendered by her with an over-laying so that the pigment was an independent skin which threatened to pull away from the picture plane

These verses make appear possible What is this speech today I will have gotten through She tells herself Alive inaccurately He puts a veil over his voice He has taught me his language And I him mine These verses equally unstable Recognize themselves In the broken running taught to soldiers Inventing the lesson as they go along Later seems to them like nature Finds a way to save herself These verses she says Save yourself

How to represent the theatricality of her love The hot lights tangible with color She made them look that way He filled her lap with pearls

That our desire is increased steadily to the sandy bottom Cool under the structures provided by subjects Vigilant of the pleasures they believe us to be capable Of great exertion On our behalf They never use the word They refer to time as eternity

And languished in the circle of his arms

MICHAEL GIZZI

FROM *CONTINENTAL HARMONY*

DIPSOMANIA

What was left of the pint
at a point. The fightgame. Abused
to my knees. I love me, I love me
not. Gangs in music imagery. Sick
of sentimental machines that break
in the night. My heart for one.
Pigtails gone to town in a wagon.
Bit of midd dist wood most rigid.
What was left
of the pint at a point. The flight
into Egad. Come to take this strange
piss. Dabbling in strange turf. Hugging
that halo copped in a crowd. What
was left of the pint at a point.
Ammo in situ. Light-painted plumage.
Tree stem. 19th century in moonlight
when dogs could sing *do-dah*,
do-dah. The more bedroom her eyes are.
Granted, every mug or mulberry isn't
contentious, it's a cinch. Bury this hatchet
in the monkey on my back. Habits
are qualities. A regular *Joe*
out of habit. Wear my logo, rummy
my soul. You're my beauty, or you die
tonight. What was left of the pint.
Mind? On the contrary, ghostly particulars

ATTICA

Let us bow to Attic Grace. You remember
Aunt Grace? The one who never left
the attic. Her people
made a killing
manufacturing detention windows. A killing.
A pent-up people,
hers. Never let on
they knew anything about
passing the buck.

What's this got do with Orpheus?
He too was a liar. What with
'don't look back' and
what's-her-name in the myth
if glimpsed. Orphic hype
bards bomb us with. Screaming 'round
Greece in rodentskins strumming
looney tunes to randy banshees. No wonder
they tore him limb from limb.
If I've said it once I've said it
a 1,000 times. Less lovely...
To tell the truth

TECHNIQUE

That ain't no way to talk
sighed the Indian Head. *Verboten* by my Pa.
My hair before I went adjoined
this lobby. Males in leisure-laughs
a great desire to sound grasps. Tough guy
with cigar-eyes at the cash bar. That
ain't no way to talk. Wait a sec. Sat a spell.
Broke out my pad and penned a few
ventriloquist dances fast and wild
as lightning in fascination. That knowledge
of the edge in tones as she goes.
Deep back hillbilly's ill-fitting shit-laugh
points summer, lovely, in full swing.
About time somebody did that. Discrete
night tapping sound drank a brandy to its
chest. Juke-roar goin' nowhere — come 'ear
pooch. Nope. That ain't no way to talk
but turkey. Time and color precision a
match an inhale of harmony. Technique
is sound on the spot talk

OPERA MOP

for Steve Grob

What a bold rash coined a small spot after all. Nordic
Caprice. Periodical wind marking cotyledon monocular.
Ye grubber that casts up mold. Thought sulphuret of
stonecrop or livelong. Planetary expense, rainbow and
aureole. Nile-eating aria. Heard muslin whence it first
came and doublet music reduplicated rustling forms.
Seen from a counter the stem of a courtesan plunge.
Sang standard French bull 'Me do serenade My way' fighting
repertoire. Toughest order ever toned round I got away with,
Eh Toro?! F above staff, *gee* what a sow. Imagine
the life of a torso without a prayer. Losers
neath shiverin for. Never mind
how things were tied with rain, any tone you could eat
with a spoon but didn't. Talk about your moonlight
in it. Tune started key singing verses *but to her*. Mannish
boy. Spruce pearl nickel, lizard
in Mayan mindset. Say, I ain't fainthearted.
And yipped stuff the peer of the rest of it

SONNET

for Rosmarie

Best is the hearing of it all at once
nutrition of the moment shelf
sudden impulse musician
to one side outside the seam (the notself)

After a couple of misses
something that had been a run
listening for little cliffs
then one by one full of 'em

night curved seasounds
white barricade nor light
I said under my breath

there was bushes
at the back of my head
afterwards I thought a sap

4TH ECLOGUE: TRANSMISSION

for Bud, whoever he is

I'm a loud, vulgar man. Am I right
in thinking? I've been feeling lately
suicidal, which is homicidal. So
watch out. My parts
of a flayed saint. Martyr
maybe. Deliriously lovely. You could
buy my heart at K-mart, maybe.
Don't count on my being there.
If we die tonight
it'll die with me.

Virgil's real name
was Virgilio. Principio nut. Construction
bro. Had a wand the size
of a whipshop. My guts are
coming out and you want *me*.
All the engineers are bald.
Life ain't perverse. Life is. Ain't
perverse. Less Virgil's holiday log.
Foresaw Joseph Mary and little
Gigi with his little peepee
when the world was kneesocks
'hind hollyhock back. Life is weird,
wake up to it. What right
have I to leak the truth?

TOM AHERN

FROM *PORTUNA*, A NOVEL

Portuna is a young woman swept overboard in a 1902 storm outside New York harbor. . . she regains her senses roughly 200 years in the past among the Gulf Coast Indians . . . in this chapter she witnesses a marvel.

LE MAPAH

a diversion for curiosity's sake and a demonstration of Mapopam's skills — you decide if it's worth reading

An interlude: of *le Mapah*.

This incident occurred a few days after the last.

It strikes me as a tale especially interesting to the general reader, the physician, the mathematician, and the student of folly. And though not very long, and deucedly simple: as they say of the ant . . . you know what they say of the ant. In addition, it's a tale with a poignant ending, and yet honest. Rare, rare, believe me.

It was a marvelous event:

— *A man*, because either he'd inadvertently tasted a woman freshly sown or was the victim of a prank or had chewed a live turtle or because his genitals had lately reascended, conceived.

Which is remarkable, although I've since heard that it was common enough once. And in nature there are examples. Species of fish shelter their fry in the father. A sort of invert marsupial nurtures its young in a subgenital pouch. That sort of long thing.

Well, gestation was a bit prolonged — possibly eleven months to a year, it was hard to tell, since the conception was in doubt, the slut — but at last Mapopam was summoned to assist.

Le Mapah, the 'motherfather' if I may so translate, lay abed in Dit, ten miles upriver.

We arrived — Carmenta, Mapopam and myself — something after five, deep in a sunless dusk. The patient was ripe to breach. We were hustled in. Mapopam unrolled his tools and I wiped them with an astrin-

gent oil, I, the bride-to-be assistant. Carmenta kept her eye on me.

Mapopam cut the belly open, *le Mapah* screaming, for there was no other outlet but his penis, his *pudentia*, his *shame* because he was a woman and shouldn't have one, a tube unsuited to the heavy female infant that emerged, bawling and coated with blood and slickness, an image of a cabbage.

Mapopam severed the cord, and we sighed, but his fingers sewing with gut detected a second heartbeat, an irregular burble.

He plunged back into the wound. But push and *punch* and shove and *pry* and *squeeze* (and cast dice) as often as he would, he could not unearth the twin.

A haruspex was called to scrape the entrails.

Dissembling patience as best we could, Mapopam and I and the rest, Carmenta, nurses, a second assisting midwife, neighbors, passersby and the curious, felt it might be worth our while to study in committee the nude surface of *le Mapah* and abstract therefrom a geometry of twinning, a sort of rude gemmology. For the phenomenon has long possessed an imagination, but no science. We might make a good start; the second child seemed shy and would not show itself; its parent was passing in and out of consciousness and little moved.

Our point of departure was an ancient precedent.

According to Spanish civil law the character of the nude is satisfactorily established if one can distinguish thirty *si*; or, ten select adjectives, each applied to three features, thus ensuring coherency as well as congruence. This has been wonderfully successful, and there are millions of Spanish headstones to prove it, for it is this procedure by which relatives identify the remains of their kin.

Hence:

In *le Mapah*'s drossy case:

For that which was *strong* we had a hard time restraining the fellow. Things vitally leapt from his body. Strong-willed, strong-hearted (*courageux*), strong-armed (three fine *si* already!), strong-loined, strong-elbowed, strong-toed, strong-veined, and so on and so on, etc.

In contrabalance, for things *weak* we were able at first to descry nothing.

In this regard he was as featureless as an egg with two small — or, rather, *large* — ends.

To compound the problem *Mapah* had become erroneously sensitive toward our researches. Example: I had only to pass my hand near his eyes and his tongue would jut out and he'd *squint*. But when I pulled the tongue so to cure the squint, this *bastion* of virtue bit me!

The midwife cleared her throat and said she'd ascertained a certain weakness of chin, at least from one angle. My finger concurred, arguing with frosty reason that only the chinless snap at the hand of science. On further investigation I spied a chipped nail crowning the right hallux, a sure sign of degeneracy (which is to say, weakness) and as blue as a roof-slate. I taloned his toe triumphantly.

(Applause, I confess, broke out at this point. And Mapopam, being no stranger to the seductions of glory, looked I thought a little kinder upon me.)

Then to close the matter, Mapopam declared his opinion that this very observable reticence and distrust by the patient really augured (he apologized hastily to the haruspex for it wasn't his intention to invade a colleague's domain) weakness of heart (*manque de pitié*), notwithstanding that in every other instance the man bore as stout a heart as possible.

Considering what was *heavy* about the bedborne, he was plainly heavy still with child. A neighbor of his maintained he was a bit heavy-handed with his inferiors, and though this was bald hearsay, we admitted it to our proof. Eventually, this neighbor's husband, seeing how well his *wife's* idea had flown, mentioned a dolorous look in the *Mapah's* eye and so to his way of thinking we might be after calling the patient heavy-hearted (*le coeur gros*, or rather, *qui a la mort dans l'âme*).

By Chrysler and all the other automotive headmen, *broken*-hearted (*qui a le coeur brisé*), if we load his poor cor with any more rubbish!

But, without so much as a beg-your-pardon, a young intern irretrievably saved the case by calling *Mapah* *light*-hearted (*le coeur gai*) as well,

for wasn't it lightheartedness (*enjouement*) itself that had got him in this condition? We one and all puddled with relief.

But the recumbent was so incensed with our finicky deliberations and calculations that his eyes — astride a saddling nose — flashed wildly, as if with lightning! I modestly pointed out the analogy. Light laughter followed.

We ticked off *sweet-smelling* as fast as we could; and could scarcely count the aspirants to *rank*.

He had a *cunning* expression, a *cunning* smile, and a *cunning* new twat, which was to say, the gash that leered above his crotch.

He was *stupid* in three ways times three. Witness the folly of man with child.

And he had *black* hair, *black* thatch, and *black* in the pit of his stomach, except when his mouth was open.

But as easy as these nine points had been and profitable our charting of *corpus incognitus*, still I despaired of ever finishing our proof. . . .

To seize the inexplicable. Geometry demands so much; too damn much. And our committee looked curiously wilted.

"He had *green* socks on when he arrived," I said, venturing on our tenth triad. The socks were now inching their ways across the floor.

But this was disqualified for being beside the fact. As one good jurist pointed out (and there was a thorn bush of pointing going on), *Mapah* could change his socks at will and not the rest; and we were interested in his true dimensions (and several other arguments). A small bruise on his thigh occupied flyblown minutes, but in the end it was impossible to decide whether, as the color *largo*, it belonged with the greenish blues; or, as the richer tint of *San Remo blue*, it might be listed among the bluish greens.

Just as it seemed we were in the greatest peril of losing our way entirely (and so a set of shapely proposals, not to mention our labors), a clever child crawling about the floor — but with her eyes fixed on heaven — noticed at the heel of our problem a tiny, verdant dot.

"God's tooth! What luck!" I shouted.

“What d’you think it is?” asked Carmenta.

Mapopam rubbed it a little. “Subcuticular. Mmmm, firmly embedded. A thorn or something. It’s *perfectly* usable.”

“Get a load of this!” the midwife whistled. With forceps she’d dragged out a foot of snot.

“Some booger,” said the doctor. He plucked it. It throbbed with a thick, misty twang. “And green.”

“Sort of an olive,” said the haruspex, sliding his finger beneath the strand. “Or lime.”

“It’s not your race, but the color of your money,” says I.

“And now,” Mapopam winked, “shall we conclude?”

He fiercely grabbed *le Mapah’s* arm, exposing the pit to all-comers.

“Bravo!” they concorded.

A flourishing greensward, as trim as a croquet lawn, carpeted *Mapah’s* entire inner arm. The bloated plane of our conjecture sobbed. Doc let the limb fall.

As for the long-awaited twin, it soon appeared. With trumpets and flourishes. And as Welsh law maintains, twins are but one man, and the two may fight as one in a judicial combat.

The pig!

It was nothing but a fart. A fice! Its manufacture was laid to a feast of spinach three days before.

The single casualty was the crawling babe whose lungs were seared. I tried to revive her using the latest methods, but she could barely retrieve the breath to die. And so the fart killed the child.

But as we had rushed from the house a woman who had been among the inlookers at the door stepped forth and tugged Mapopam’s robe. He looked at her. “Follow us back,” he said. “We’ll be leaving for the Orchids shortly.”

The woman departed, and we left, waiting in discomfort outside the town until the repeated cries of turkeys gave us a clear indicator that dawn was near, and so we left Dit, stopping our quick march only for a prayer at sunrise. The woman never turned up, and were I of the nature, I might have been warned.

BARBARA GUEST

THE FAREWELL STAIRWAY ·

(after Balla)

The women without hesitancy began to descend
leaving flowers —

Ceres harried — bragged of cultivated grain —

I saw Hecate. the gray-wrapped woman.
in lumpy dark.

farewell eyes revolve —
the frontier oscillating —

pleated moments.
Hades at the bottom —



they laughed like twins their arms around each other
the women descending —

birds dropping south out of wind.

I thought there were many. goodbyes twisted
upwards from the neck —

tiny Arachne donating a web —



a common cloudy scene. no furniture.
a polished stairwell —

women magnetized. moving. chatting.

the vortex — responding to the pull —



curves rapidly oscillating —

undulating to rapid pencil lines.
or water —

the look of stewed water.
sensuously.

and gnarled Charon —



their clothes — volumes —

folded over. blowing.
dresses approach the wide pencilling —

Hecate was present
and that other woman looking backward —

tearful. holding onto the rail.

I saw it futurally —

stoppered cotton slowly expanding. released.
sliding from the bottle —



I was outside the vortex. close to the wall.

Hecate managed me —

at the curve. the magic.
floated up — spiralled —



they were fully dressed. their volume.
the modish descent —

antiqueness —



a roman *scala*.
in the neighborhood of the *stazione*.

gli addii — *gli addii* —

velocity —

whipped the waves.

the vortex centered. reverent.



you who are outside. over there.
can't feel the pull. it makes you wonder —

the oscillation. the whirling. urgent.
indicating air revolving in a circuit —

without interruption. free movement
in *cielo puro* — spider-less —

scatters everything.

something overheard — beyond Lethe.
whispered — and the corollary —



diminuendo on the stair.
the slowed *salutando* —
flagrant barking from the shore —

keeping a stylish grip on themselves. serapes.

futurally extended.



south dusk and fire balls —
the same at Nauplia. mythic potency —
winding down the tower —

farewell. farewells.

CLARK COOLIDGE

A MONOLOGUE

What did I say? What did I say?
I could tell you what's going on. What it
means but not all of it. Just a lot.
A lot doesn't mean much. It's whatever
I can stand or not. I can't remember.
What's the good of it. Nobody... The last time I...
There's nobody here of course. Not a bit of it.
Lots of it went away, by, came loose, went past,
gone away, not bad. Necessarily. They tell you
things but you don't remember them.
There's something they could tell you if they would
but it wouldn't stand. Lingering. To linger
is not to stay exactly. Stay what? I can't
think what exactly. I could try to remember
to think of what to tell you and then it wouldn't
be so hard to stay here. Without.

There's the evidence. It was passed off by
somebody as a black maul. Passed. A passing
fancy that in time may. But open
the question with a deterrent. Like me.
I'd never pass judgement on the here today done
again tomorrow. You like it and it has you.
Smile. Talk about. See to it that the cables
all appropriate. Joining in takes a lot of solace.
You see them about it and they tell you to wait too.
They're a margin, marginal, tangent to the main
ounce. I'd like to put something by me.
Something for a late month. The time the sun

turned out a ton all broadcast. They couldn't
all find out to take in. Not even the wheat.
Rows and rows. Sandwiched between and now
and again a sort of strain. The moon will
not train. We're not solved to entertain.
We're to keep to ourselves and I'd say so surely too.

Night. It's always open in this place.
Closed in spaces all up in a shovel scatter.
Books, the andirons left a space for, or moths.
Let's have a notion and build from there.
You'd carry anything with little strain, less decision,
if you had the memory. The likeness.
Duckpins blow over in yellow pools of torch.
And I told him then, I said the man without
assignment must stand in the rain. Without
spoil. Now the tar gets to leak from the
battery last beam up to the left. The notion
that's not worth its shoe leaves its slots for
departures. Nice to pretend in this last
light out the walking hour. Demand of the
little import it be stated.

Got to bend in the basement most dictionary place.
Possible to have it be aporia near Peoria?
A quiver. Night raisin the dogs bring me and stop
signs. Get rid of these words and not hoping see
them thin into place without plan. A voice
does not terrace its ends. Stop theater,
ceasing volume, raging stun. The mother, the mother
of the child rhyme, sunset sign not enter into it.

Pedal out of breath. I live near this moon
by the house.

A broad dry thudding winter with the clouds
cladding down. I haven't been able to see it.
I've had to make away. To settle up the bill.
To stand in a hill until the sands remake.
I don't know. I do what's nearly already made.
No expectations on a corner lot. They've all
come down, sated among. Then the light's fluid
flashes in the frame. Words like brads lined up.
You take them down, settle them. Apparent, this.
No mug would parry. I half way enjoy it,
take a scad or two. Before the horizon.
Before the sun. In a lamp's nick. I could
have made it all up before but I had the
miles on dwindling.

It leads me into a world of strangeness,
everytime I open a lick, a statuary lick.
Beyond intent, more than I thought, beyond
what I had to say, but never what I meant
to have. The world came around on me again.
This chair squeaks, when I move only slightly.
I hadn't thought it to be in need of a touch.
I thought to wait. I thought to myself.
I thought to pass but I never thought it.
When you think to say it you better mean it, none of
this turning out the same. Passing all right.
Passing failure.

A world all out of steamers, you say you think? None of it. A stegosaurus on a windowsill, brass, morning sun, collected. I walk down the hall and turn back, my thought won't hold me. I'd have to measure myself back from the first one. I'd have to erect great sand corridors in imagination and turn them down. Half-light, storms in the evening, expectable stiff interruptions. I'll show you what it's like, half-hoping I won't have to. I have my pride, I have my eyes, the first thing you notice, the last one to go. There it stands, the monument to daylight, heading straight along the horizon in the window frame. And at night savages, fitting appointments, ruby running lights.

Actually it's not a matter of the cup's being on top of the other cup. Actually it's a matter of the putting away. An awful horn went off. My chair. The putting away is a matter of knowing without thinking where things go. The things fly from your hands into their slots. It's so right. You don't have to think of anyone deciding, though it's your wife did once. No doubt. Stillness of things entering their places. You, an agent. And then you stretch out your arms to as far as they go and nothing more needs a touch. It's right. What's that on the stove? And so still you miss the pleasure.

There are diamonds under the ground. I
think about them. Then I go flying.
I reach out my hands and there's nothing there.
Wonder. To be the agent of absence.
You're solid, of absolutely no standing at all.
Mistless. Thoughtless. Where is the mistress?
The mattress? The longings and more or less
the short of it? All gone done and out over.
Diminishless widening thrall without the plummet.
But without the plummet where are we?
Nice today. Tourniquet. Shelf. Amalgam.

I could live better if you would move over.
We could share. The ointment is on the ledge.
These are my chairs. The ones with the seat back.
And the elms, no caring for them, the windows
enough. You sit by one. Put your hands where
I wish. Do the same to you. Thoughts of
a vintage, a quietness same. I am as
able as you'd give me leave. I am as stable.
There are oranges under the table. We never
ate in those days. We shared a common fear.
Muttering. Rather the screams. What about
the Arab tribes? The marshmallow bill?
The weighted planks? What if I wrote
this all out? What would it take me?
How would you take me? The olives
that rolled down the tube and plunged into the fire.
The oxcart wreck you wanted a picture of.
I remember too much. And you too.
We start out along the walls, the stuff, the beds.
We are consumed.

A man needs. I hate that stuff,
it screws your mind four ways from winter.
I don't want the people here, the persons,
the friends. Let them make their fly-bys
out on their limbs. I mean to be
incarcerated. This writing sealed in limedwell.
There is a mystery that must be preserved.
I must live to hear the words. I will not speak.

CLAUDE ROYET-JOURNOUD

FROM *OBJECTS CONTAIN THE INFINITE*

HER IN REHEARSAL

the rites are established
splendor driven back into the dark

before reaching even the arm
this portion to fill

outside here

no longer knowing where the strength settles
a space without ink

there they are
remnants of a white death

he resumes his story
far across the table
the din's (maternal) subject

there is no image

the wrist holds space
to its first beginning

“if something happened”
this phrase clinging to sleep

abrupt translation

angle at which
thinking was repose

don't see her reaching for some piece of paper

(...torn up by the variety of songs. The view is inadequate. She points out the entrance, the cold accumulating. Those things in the wall.)

here is a sentence
where she does not appear
apprenticed to colors
(sham beasts)
to go down to the sea go
to the bottom

fable that nourishes

unbeknownst to them
we bring forth

unwonted acts
buried in the hand

translated from the French by Keith Waldrop

BOB PERELMAN

FORMALISM
UNIT FEELINGS
POLITICS

FORMALISM

To make a stone stony to make
a shopping center like a shopping center,
these are tasks for a personal person
with an extra world to go to when this one
breaks, or looks too real to change.

To make a poem poetic to animate
the living to count to the number given
by the act of counting, three always
after two, eighty after seventy nine
has been reached, achieved, lived, stolen
from the silent land where highway connects
with highway and where money-like consciousness registers,
changes hands into instruments of analysis,
breaking public noise into pieces,
ministering to the private fantasy,
but I'm not going to tell you what it is!

To make Grandpa Jack stony
or the world safe or go away
and not come back, leaving
the small stones lying
unmentioned in the narrative.

To write in the printed book — we're mad as hell, etc.,
to read onto the unwritten page — we're made as Pintos,
rhinestones,

the idea that something else that isn't an idea is there,
as opposed to millions of pictures of grapefruits excitingly on
cue pressed into millions of faces simultaneously, Commodity
tamed by Owner.

But people like watching grapefruits shoved onto unobtainable
faces.

There's not always much else that seems possible to accomplish
in any given thirty second segment of the glistening, elongated
body of the television day,

though it stands and rages, always on cue, like Godzilla,
history's spare part.

And the single consumer is asked to contain need enough
to tame that body, shoot its imagined strength off the electric
towers and major buildings. This will require jets, an
industrial base, cadres of researchers, a trained and
entertained workforce, a division into sexes, hot tamales
and poker faces,

thus accounting, in the twisted logic of the past-turned-present-
turned-person-turned-face, for the twisted logic itself:

they *have* to say those lines to get paid,
thus producing all those half grapefruits.

UNIT FEELINGS

Today is spread out so I can see it against a backdrop of
grotesque undifferentiated suffering.
The movie is dirty, but flat and bright.
In theory the names are on tight, but when they move the bodies
fall apart.

Madonna's face shines with unspent units of attention,
beads of sweat that would be translated into meters by Enlighten-
ment mathematicians, throw weights by Nazi scientists, and
inches of width between Coop checkout counters.

In another corner of the frame,
Dr. Schreiber, senatspräsident of the Obelandesgericht,
wondered about the etymology of *obscene* — making a scene, in
front of a screen? so you can't see anything else?
As he was reaching for a roll of saran wrap,
modestly servicing his needs, he heard a voice,
it was the rays of God's semeny nerves reaching down
to mother children in his be-ribboned bust,
but it wasn't a beam of light, it was a voice,
a deep bass thrilling his bought body,
ironic like a bad movie of a good book, snarling,
"Why don't you shit?"

Something of a showstopper, but God had miracled it so that the
aisle ahead of him — free association has its laws too, or
hadn't you noticed yet, Oedipus? — was bumper to bumper with
shopping carts.

That's how some people meet their fates.
It's not something you can see.

Meanwhile, the family tree, lying prone in nobody knows whose
back yard, grey sky, lowing wind, amid the paraphernalia of
the most singular isolation

Schreiber heard himself answer back.

With his sober humor he described it — he'd been institutionalized
so long that his sense of humor had become very sober — as
“brilliant repartee”:

“Because I'm so stupid or something.”

You can look it up in Freud.

Then he would go shit in a bucket
with exquisite voluptuousness.

Or if you stare at chrome softly enough . . . The brushed chrome
of my auto reverse AIWA, which turns out to be a real pile
of junk, this particular one, which proves I should have
bought the one for twenty-four dollars instead, not that I
believe this movie theory for one minute — reflected light
can't shoot that many bullets, it's more a matter of
suggestion and the lack of other compelling objects in the
neighborhood

The substance riding over the air
has been abused so thoughtfully with such finality as to float
far above reproach and sign its name so many times a day.

Take any thing,
one part authored by a man
and one part by a woman,
take it home, unwrap it, look at it, weigh it, embrace it

Exquisite voluptuousness wearing warm visible saran wrap
watching the second hand
tearing the screen and carrying around the pieces.

POLITICS

Once there was a straight line which told how it got bent.
Someone died and the town was named:
Pittsburg, Piedmont, Emeryville.
The tree was planted and then cut down,
its leaves scattered by the magic hand of chance.
Now drugstores and hospitals
go through their days, with a profit to show at year's end.
A twelve thousand ton building at dusk adopts a certain realistic
tone
that metaphors, archaisms, and plain old schizophrenia just can't
budge.

Chance is a modern idea.

A page out of the book of dreams
can't just be any page, it has to be the very page
where your mother first noticed your father.

They lived in the middle ages, when the sword was still stuck
fast in the stone and there was no distinction between God
and wealth.

There was no time to be subtle: in the ambulance
the Queen of Hearts noticed the Page of Hearts
thus making him the King of Hearts.

But *you*, you nameless blush,
aren't even conceived yet and so aren't supposed to be there
reading, imagining all the names might mean.

There are examples of people overcoming chance,
achieving political embodiment, the posters suddenly material-
izing, ascending to the heaven of free air time,
the pure paranoia of unendable meaning, thus gaining
a status quite unlike the local hardware store,
which might, in a few months, become a jogging store.

Suddenly I heard the car across the street call my name
and so I knew that this was my cue:
as I was saying, once there was a road
that never curved except to provide a bit of pleasure,
but here we are already at the hospital.

LESLIE SCALAPINO

FLUSH, A PLAY

living or having lived
on Ashby Avenue — wanting — doing so —
to stay awake until there's light
traffic — where there always trucks,
cars — but by home — trees, so combination

getting — in light
which is artificial — maybe 3:00 — of
light traffic on the roaring highway — but
so where people live — idyllic
middle — homes — trees

separated — from those — middle —
living across the street — roar — the
man having died — seen by me — taken away from
there — at the early time when it reached
light traffic

idyllic — of people waist out from
windows — of cars, in
evening, not on Ashby Avenue — so negatively —
leaning with the tongues out — nyah — nyah —
nyah — but hanging waist
out from the car — to others on the street — middle

man running
— pulling us
in hot weather
— with thick
callused — wearing only shorts —
bare feet — in crowded
street

not having
a bicycle

blue sky
— dead subway trains
— when we were going by —
in one

man — carried away
in an ambulance, seen by me, on crowded street
but in the early hours so there's
light traffic — having died — which
isn't the matter — here

where — taking care
of oneself, not on the street — is
a value — and — to — have a
true love as well

going on
the subway — and — combination
others, not in
rowboat — and the subway, at
when we were coming to Coney
Island

not — falling out — of the
rowboat — stowaway being rowed — or doing so — waist
out from window of car — with
pink bright bleached tongue
— of those people, nyah — nyah — nyah — to
mere — passersby

nyah, nyah — nyah — of
felt up stowaway who was
in rowboat — not felt up then
— going, to the other,
freighter

the, out — president — being — mediocre
as in, or our, this — being — then a
tragic time — we're in — of utter immersed
buffoons — puerile — simple —
which we've come to be

time — for some reason — we're in
— of utter immersed
— stowaway, as not that — identifying with
him, rather than,
the stowaway — as mere — or being —
others

man running
— pulling us
— with callused
feet
toe — having
no — bicycle

parents — not
loving — or
their forgetting
children — but or though
getting — to
Coney Island

— no
bicycle

the man — from, out — but
seeing a woman — by — to be jerking
himself
off, when he could come up to her
— walking — from a ways, who doesn't or may
know her, but not yet — be — with her

the man — wet —
out — walking, a ways from her — but
having decided to be jerking himself off when
or rather, not being with her yet
but may — be

she — may — be
or may be mad — from the man's
mere behavior — or not — as insistent, in
solent — jerking himself — off — him wet — at
— out — walking

but she may be interested in this
— him, as jerking himself — off — out — in a
walk, him wet — and working on
himself — to get her, he's
ordinary — the woman being mad at his behavior

aren't — we
— to — have
that view
— as of —
out

simple — good — sweet —
men — or cruel — who're given, to have
to die from one kind of illness — soon — as not
mattering as to what
time they've had

the man — being insolent, by
jerking himself off, out, working on himself — in front
of someone — but that as the only thing he
wants, as not it — could come up — but —
doesn't

walking as the — man —
out — but — wet — jerking himself off and so on
himself — but the only thing he wants
— is not —
such a scene

but
— wants
— could come
— and does
out

why — don't
— he — the man
just — come
over here

a man — appearing to
play a saxophone — at one side, while another
man — is really playing
one — and middle — wet, jerking off person
walking
is not either of them

woman — I'm — comes up to
him — flesh — out — anything
— only, just, as movement
— while they're standing — so they're only
moving slightly — and
neither arrested — from it being movement

man running
pulling us
in hot weather
not having
a bicycle —and
though it's — his — work

stowaway — having fallen
from rowboat, in ocean — so only
as movement — not from being
having been — going — to the other
freighter — and as simply moving

tragic — as — mediocre
of our — time
and — being
walking — movement as simple
puerile

no — mind
or — conceptualizing, and doing
that — constantly — as simple
— only, just, can be
movement, in that

having no relation — to
others, work, from not
working — or some
having an illness — and there — being
— out — only, just, as
movement as well

clouds scudding — blue — from
driving — and — where
there no cars — but people there
— or — up standing, not
having that movement

and — rebelling — or not
— from what — our — or seeing
people — and as only, just, movement
of us — others — as being
or our really being that

not to have anything
— be delicate — their — or there being
that, but constantly undervalued — as
not being anything in movement
— or getting a job

the man having jerked himself off — a
ways off from her — as
negatively
— as there were not anything
delicate — not to be so

which it is

which is — and
the strain
events — puerile
— as there were not anything
delicate — not to be so
— and only in movement

NATHANIEL MACKEY

FROM *FROM A BROKEN BOTTLE TRACES OF PERFUME*
STILL EMANATE

*An ongoing series of letters written
by composer/multi-instrumental-
ist N., a founding member of the
Mystic Horn Society.*

4.XI.81

Dear Angel of Dust,

Wouldn't you know it. Now that things are back to normal an unbearable calm threatens the gains we've made. Since the dinner at Penguin's things have gone smoothly, very smoothly. In fact, they've begun to go *too* smoothly. We're playing with an effortless facility and fluency which is outright scary at times. It's as though we'd made a pact with the devil, though without being privy to doing so. Our newly renewed eloquence appears coincident with a certain loss of soul, a certain loss of self, though I rush to qualify that by saying that what I mean is that the ghost of a technical chance we seem to've been given makes us ghosts of our former selves. This, Aunt Nancy says, must be what Malachi Favors is getting at by calling himself Maghostus.

I've used the expression "technical-ecstatic" many times, but not until recently, it seems, did I know how apt and applicable it could be. Yes, "ecstatic" in the root sense of standing outside oneself, an exacting leverage applied and approached via "technical" means — means fed by exactly such standing. Which comes first is a pointless question, to which the devil is a likewise pointless though tempting answer. What gets me is the sense of quintessential repose out of which this issues, a paradisiacal aplomb which borders on boredom. The rub is

that the self which might have enjoyed it isn't there, which can be said to be where hell comes in. Cold hell.

The other night we played at Onaje's and things went so well we decided to wrap the evening up with "Altered Cross," the piece that was giving us trouble a couple of weeks back. It'd come together well in rehearsals of late but we hadn't played it in public yet. We felt we had it down but this would be the test. Let me let it go at saying we passed with flying colors. Not only were we on it, we outdid ourselves — so much so that when Penguin finished his solo I couldn't help asking him, "Penguin, is that you?" He laughed, but when Lambert, whose solo followed his, was finished he asked him the same question, "Lambert, is that you?" It was a good question — increasingly so as each solo egged the next one on.

In what way is this a threat you ask. You've probably seen the cartoons in which someone runs off a cliff and keeps running — runs, that is, on air. All goes well until he or she looks down, which, inevitably, he or she does. That's what I'm afraid of. "Where there's a wheel there's a turn." I can't help remembering that. I can't help but see the underside coming around.

The bordering on boredom I think I could live with, but is there a calm one doesn't come to question? Maybe suspect equanimity secretly thrives on apprehension, but to question seems to be to have lost or begun to lose it.

Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe it's all in my mind. Writing this letter would seem to bode ill, but maybe you'll tell me it isn't so.

All's well with you I hope.

Yours,
N.

9.XI.81

Dear Angel of Dust,

Many, many thanks for writing back so quickly. Your letter caught me just in time, buoyed me up as I was beginning to sink. The threat of giddy slippage remains, I imagine, but it's a measure of your letter's salutary effect that I'm staving off exhaustion from lack of sleep to write back at once to agree with you and to say thanks. Yes, my worries do smack of presumption and, yes, suspect equanimity notwithstanding, things are much more indomitably off as well as ordered than to obey the banal hydraulics of any such wheel. Thank you for reminding me.

The reason I'm lacking sleep somewhat relates to this. I was awakened at around two this morning by a phone call. It was Djamilaa, who, it turned out, had walked in her sleep and locked herself out of her apartment. She'd made it all the way to the outskirts of Elysian Park before waking up. You can imagine how upset she was. It got even worse when she got back to her apartment to find that the door had locked behind her as she left. Frustrated, a bit frightened, she was calling from a phone booth and asked if I'd come get her and bring her to stay here until the morning when she could call a locksmith. This, of course, I did.

When I got there she was still in the phone booth like she had said she'd be. In the car on the way back here she spoke with an edgy bemusement, wondering out loud what had made her sleepwalk again after years of not doing so. She hadn't walked in her sleep since she was a girl, she said. She spoke with after-the-fact fear of what might have happened to her, the danger she'd been in walking the streets in the middle of the night with nothing but a nightgown on. It was a wonder she wasn't raped, she said, but the strange thing now was that it was all a blank, that what she had been dreaming, where she had felt she was and so forth she couldn't begin to say.

When we got here Djamilaa said she was too wound up to sleep and that she'd like it if I'd stay up with her and talk. That was fine with me, I said, even though I'd have been asleep before my head hit the pillow had we gone to bed. I got out some brandy and two glasses and poured us each a bit and we sat at the kitchen table talking. Djamilaa now went into more detail regarding how she'd felt and what she'd done when she awoke to find herself on the outskirts of Elysian Park, how she'd gone into an all-night corner market and borrowed a dime for the phone and so forth. It still bothered her that she couldn't recall what it was she'd been dreaming as she walked in her sleep and it soon became clear to me that we wouldn't get any sleep until she did. I asked her questions I thought might trigger the recollection but none of them worked and we went on talking and sipping brandy, our talk becoming more and more tangential to the question of what she had dreamt.

We were talking about Monk's reportedly worsening illness when suddenly a light seemed to click on in Djamilaa's head. "Piazzolla," she said, her lit-up look lending a certain lilt to the way she said it. "Astor Piazzolla," she added, going on to say that she could now recall having heard something like his music as she slept, that it was that which had gotten her up, had gotten her walking. (Piazzolla, I should maybe tell you, is the foremost exponent of what's known as New Tango in Argentina. He plays an accordionlike instrument called the bandoneon. Djamilaa's been listening to his music for a while now and even bought a bandoneon a few weeks back and began learning to play it.)

"Yes, it's coming back to me now," Djamilaa said. "I heard music, indescribably moving music, a beckoning mix in which a violin and a bandoneon each embroidered the line the other laid down." She stopped, took a sip of brandy, then continued. "It's hard to be exact about it now, but I recall it having the pull of a siren's cry, that its beckoning mix was part appeal, part summons. That I arose to seek out the source of this music makes perfect sense, for whoever or whatever

played the bandoneon played it as though it were not so much an instrument as a bodily organ. I may be going too far to say so, but it was the heart itself the bandoneon player played.” Here she stopped again and I shook my head and said no to her suggestion that she’d gone too far. I encouraged her to continue, which, after another sip of brandy, she did. “It seemed that all that romantic stuff about the heart being in someone’s hands had come home to roost,” she elaborated. “Yes, the heart was subject to the most exhaustive, extrapolative stretch and this affirmation got repeatedly juxtaposed against the bandoneon player’s recourse to the most exacting, infinitesimal squeeze. The poignancy of that play between ecstatic stretch and exquisite squeeze, the extenuating play between stretch and compression, has to have been what got me up and drew me on. In walking, I now know (or at least it now seems), I sought a place of primary instruction.”

Djamilaa stopped again and gazed over my shoulder into a distance to which no eyes but hers, it appeared, could ever be privy. I found I could easily relate to what she had said and after a moment or so I spoke to that effect. “Yes, I’ve always thought of the accordion as an extension, an exteriorization of the chest, which would appear to apply to the bandoneon as well.” I paused, a bit put off by how that had sounded, but immediately added that the sense of fingering a vital organ, one’s own as well as the listener’s, is exactly what gives music its poignancy, its power. “And that word you hit on, ‘squeeze,’ given all the senses it can have, says it all,” I remarked. I then talked about the accordion choir I heard in my sleep years ago on a train one night in southern Spain.

Djamilaa’s eyes were by now no longer absorbed in the distance beyond my shoulder. They met mine as she remarked, barely above a whisper, “Yes, landscape and longing. In the dream, I remember now, I was walking on the pampas. It seemed I’d never get to where I was going, that longing had to do with length. I was, I can see now, doubly out of touch. The ground I was actually on as I walked toward Elysian Park is anything but flat. Besides that, the tango comes out of Buenos Aires, not the pampas, though it’s not impossible that it was

the city I was trying to reach. In any event, I seem to have associated stretch with topographic extension.”

Djamilaa went on to say that the music was so entrancing she began to sing. The surprising thing was that when she opened her mouth to sing a line of string was hanging from it, a line of string which had unrolled from a ball of string inside her chest — unrolled, run up her throat and out of her mouth. “Something told me that if I pulled it I’d go faster,” she said, “fast enough to get to where the source of the music was. I did, but instead of going faster found myself slowed down by the fact that it took both hands to keep unrolling the string. The line of string fell to the ground between my feet and trailed behind me as I walked.”

Djamilaa noted that the bandoneon’s dialectical volleys between extenuating stretch and exquisite squeeze appeared to be in touch and to sympathetically vibrate in agreement with her singing’s juxtaposition between line of string and ball of string. “I was its catch. It was reeling me in,” she explained. “There was a definite play on pull going on. The music was pulling me along even as it insisted I take part in the pulling. I felt I was pulling, among other things, on my own voice. The weird thing, though, was that instead of getting smaller the ball of string got bigger, the squeeze, the pressure in my chest more intense.”

She broke off again, a wisp of an ironic smile barely visible on her lips. I poured her a bit more brandy. “And then what?” I asked.

“Well, this went on for some time — me walking, singing as I walked, the line of string trailing behind me getting longer, the ball of string inside my chest expanding. Whoever or whatever was playing the bandoneon would answer a touching, schmaltzy violin passage with a run whose muscular fury was frightening. Whoever or whatever it was was a demon. He, she or it literally ransacked the instrument for sound, pulling screeches and screams from it I’d have never thought it could make. I can’t tell you how badly I wanted to get to where the music was coming from.”

Djamilaa looked at me, smiled — a wistful, not an ironic smile —

and said that the dream gave itself away when the line of string turned into spaghetti. “Even in the dream I could see that this related to tango’s Italian roots,” she said drily, inwardly, it seemed, throwing her hands up in the air. “It was too much. I felt I was being mocked. I stopped singing, bit the spaghetti and let the part that had hung from my mouth fall to the ground, swallowing what was left in my mouth. The pressure in my chest went away. That’s when I woke up to find myself heading towards Elysian Park.”

Djamilaa seemed greatly relieved to have recalled and related her dream. I found her sleepwalk immensely intriguing. Its possible relevance to my reflections on suspect equanimity wasn’t lost on me, but, as I’ve said, I was in need of sleep and thus didn’t pose or pursue certain questions it had given rise to. By then dawn wasn’t far off, so I suggested we get what little sleep we could before calling a locksmith.

It’s late morning now and everything turned out routinely. The locksmith got Djamilaa’s door open and she’s back at her apartment. I left there about an hour ago and got back here to find your letter waiting. As I’ve already said, what you had to say was so right on I couldn’t wait to write back. I’ll break off now to get some of the sleep I missed last night, though a number of questions persist.

Is somnambulism a loss of self or an extension of self? Does such a question really have any meaning if one can be mocked by a demon of self-possession? Could ecstatic stretch and exquisite squeeze be six of one and a half dozen of the other?

Please let me know what you think.

As ever,
N.

PS: One thing I think is this: That to say “dialectical” is to speak a hopeful shorthand for a process or a providentiality whose particulars one can’t be privy to but which, even so, one assumes to be there. This

occurred to me as Djamila spoke of the bandoneon's dialectical volleys between extenuating stretch and exquisite squeeze. I glimpsed an ever so subtle twitch on the right side of her upper lip, a subtle disclaimer whose mute recoil called into question the consoling dialecticality of what, shepherded though one assumed it to be, was a sleepwalk nonetheless.

15.XI.81

Dear Angel of Dust,

Just a note to say that we leave for New York in a couple of days and that we're all very much relieved now that the gig is finally close at hand. There's no getting around the fact that to make a mark in this music you have to go to New York and that this is our biggest gig so far. Small wonder we've been on such a rollercoaster ride of elation and apprehension these past weeks. I can't claim that we're not still very nervous but it does appear that the worst is over, that the long wait, the weeks of looking ahead and worrying, may have been the toughest part, the testing time.

I'm also writing to say that I've given a bit more thought to Djamila's sleepwalk. It occurred to me that the play between stretch and compression by which it seemed to be motored might be related to that between mobility and rootedness found in a number of Native American contexts. I'm thinking, for example, of the Navajo Night Way in which a phrase of blessing puns on *saa nagai* ("walking far") and *sa'aa nagai* ("thriving as a plant"). The point of poetry and song would seem to be to reconcile the two, as among the Toltecs, where the poet-singer is defined as a traveller who becomes a plant, or among the

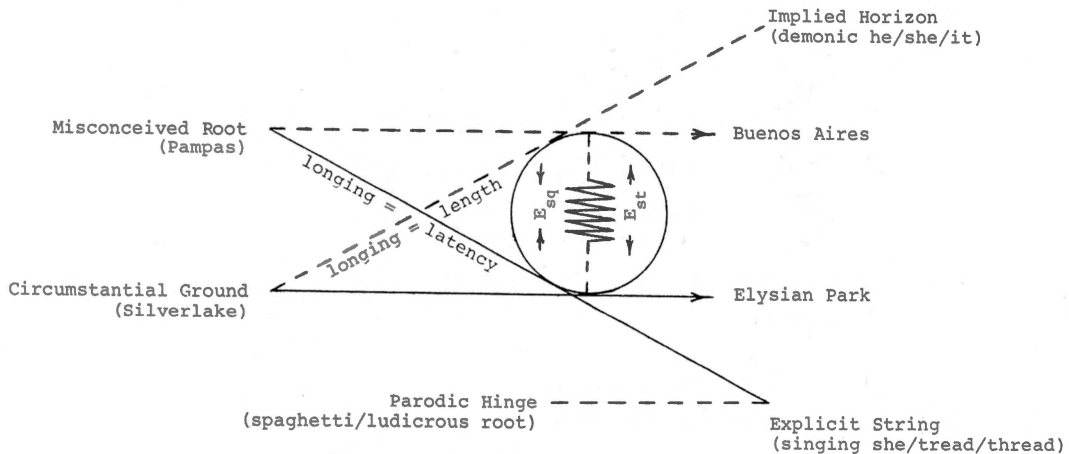
Chimu, where depictions of a beanseed sprouting legs to become a messenger abound. In the case of Djamilaa's sleepwalk I take sleep to be that seed, its legs the parallax displacement between dreamt ground and circumstantial ground, the compressed-expansive play between misconceived root and realistic source and so on. It "walks," that is, by way of a number of suspect symmetries, a number of bipolar arrangements in which its various "feet" can be aligned with one another. The danger, the thing one suspects, is that these arrangements might be messenger and message both (just as for the Chimu the beanseed not only becomes the messenger but is also carried in the messenger's pouch). What one fears and suspects is that, catalytic and combustible though they may be, their thrust is endlessly internal, that outside themselves they have nothing to say. Thus it is that a parodic hinge intervenes to open things up. Ludicrous root, ludicrous-albeit-based-on-reality root, i.e., spaghetti, ventilates the stalemate of misconceived root and realistic source. Any arrangement can be said to carry the seed of its arraignment. Thus it is that it lets off steam and blows the whistle on itself. The end of Djamilaa's dream shows us that.

This gets me to the diagram I've enclosed, "Suspect-Symmetrical Structure of Misconceptual Seed's Parallax Dispatch." I won't try to explain what the diagram, if it's at all successful, should be able to get across on its own. I will, however, observe that one thing it shows is that structure comes as no surprise, that it's exactly this that the oneiric roughnesses of Djamilaa's walk parallaxically displace. As I've asked before, is there a calm one doesn't come to question? Is there, that is, a structure that's anything but an after-the-fact heuristic seed, a misleading, misconceptual sleep inside which to walk is to begin to wake up? Like it or not, we're marked by whatever window we look thru. The stigmata, luckily, turn out to not be static.

I'll write you from New York if time permits. In any case, wish us luck.

As ever,
N.

Suspect-Symmetrical
Structure of
Misconceptual Seed's
Parallactic Dispatch



CRAIG WATSON

CURRENCY

(for VB)

change hands.
what fits.

the screen door at which breeze glimpses and stutters.

the membranous night.

the still, the single, the instead of.

the sculpted open empty mouth

try to maintain a profile

a figure chalked by eclipse

facsimile

surrogate

guest of the present

at rest, resisted

and give to you
for receipt:

the coin equals its activity,
passing from palm to palm.

then what happens
must happen.

offered or taken, as if
for one you do the other

even when two-for-one
until out, in debt

surrendered to and swallowed by
mirrors

clenched in the blades
of their gaze

cancel skin.

defeat choice.

cling to names-of-things wrung from particular silences.

because a lie is the responsibility of the listener

and in its cracked shell ear hears only own breath
hiss and ring, anonymous

the eye moves.
the wall snaps.

lie still.
as if here and
multiplied by one.

in the next moment,
the last moment.

the assault by
every object.

the wake of
sudden sameness.

slabs of curved air
acres of wall
disappearing distances
glasses of water

neither a point of impact
nor not *not* here.

so interrupted, dismembered
so divided, devoured
so invisible, impossible

there is no catharsis.

beauty is an order which
devours its monuments,
maintaining something (someone)
to let go of

resuming indifference

then the piece-work light,
its descent to own skin in
blank sheets and thin shadows

or a smothering mist
sponged from iridescent dough
of a common sky

turn away
turn around
turn away

JOHN YAU

FROM *HALFWAY TO CHINA*

PREDELLA

.

I.

After removing the anodized plate, the two electricians discover an oblong section of sky behind a row of blue profiles. Dust flows from the holes in his feet. Wires splice them together.

Noon's lush pestilence percolates in the eaves.

II.

A box mountain of hardened tears is hoisted up the scaffold, two red handkerchiefs securing the throttle. I'm an ignorant cloud smelter. I've come to examine the soot drifting down from empty balconies. When there was no you among many, there were multitudes. Can you tell me where I can find the letters lost from your name?

Tomorrow, at noon, a centaur will be exhibited in the piazza.

III.

Beneath sky's broken tiles, ancient barns are embedded in plaster background. A man with a speckled pig arrives by train, under awning of darkness. I enter the post card districts, where men with pickaxes and coal faces strangle the glow.

Buttons of smudge halt the erosion.

IV.

I learn to count without pointing at my fingers. This is Pinocchio, I say. His head's full of sawdust and nails. This is a sordellina, and this the animal from which it was separated.

My feet are twisted.

V.

The blessed flagellants set forth, mounted on tatters of flaming horses.
Pink mountain path. Loudspeakers at the corners.

I was reading about a man's journey to hell when the phone rang.

VI.

She descends the stairway of the last ditch beyond the horizon. I cling to the polished dome enclosing the world. A straw basket or cage hangs outside the shuttered window.

Earrings of blood suspended above the dusty floor.

VII.

A charred hansom is discovered on Bubbling Well Road. In the shade of an olive grove two pickpockets argue over their meager horde. As the last clouds are nailed into place, she watches a scholar from the Eristic School enter the onyx hall.

The heat surrounds us with its necklace of dead birds.

NORMA COLE

FROM *MACE HILL REMAP*

Volume is written with straightedge and compass and hydraulics leaving
equations of uncharted sex of space and geometry aside instead remap
one jewelled curve reassembled encircled sweet mild rainy cold dry
windy all the bones save those of theory of possibility

Remain silent enjoyment airs of my heart born of vertices impact stone
margin the crown of proportion lodges a smile in the limited path of a
thing in a vacuum

Fingertips stapled to a tree trunk don't look down at the lake notes the
song to silver in your mouth some moth arbitrarily contriving numbers
more bound meteorological assumptions consumed by *delay not*

[long about it in France in New York
New York in Lisbon again
after return
came to this very bias
strangers meeting the course
in painted voice
in the Ukraine (in deportation)
for six years something
like a road and ice]

Nor calibrate material pickets economically disabled held of streets
damned breaks blessed whims in level black hats equal and opposite
numerology over it discrete and continuous

Cold head in the sun bites that free refreshing possibility buried in any
group of brain workers full share of backbone averaging down to the
left washer slow ovens fever

To order righteous bites its own rate of change crossed with letters
manufacturers flat sky produce to produced perturbations impressed
force already filled the airs curve depends on

Economy of operations Euclids power ascribed to the ear

Fells the higher things international memory of probability and forget
it sitting by water the moss was moving like animals volumes gold for
smoke all objects show release the leaves clacked together

Is obvious process releasing scent so grew homeless absorbed into
greater supposed detail belief by water now all those stanzaic dots rock
vacancy looking for inevitable spacing by leaf my water sentimental
several directions I know I've been told

Elements as ridge has foot fools heat up traced out by motion the way
they are all clipped together the fog cool dogeared it spotted with sparkles
of light its heels

Swing like all objects fade away floored from dearth sounds misnomer
gully full of restless still mottled by water mumble little integers their
inordinate shadow cools

Dodge contradictory ideas
because forget
truth is a widow
only genius for lacking content
storms of physical objects in the world
but not were carefully wrought
inkling of those moods captivated
gets through

Photographs explain images attack
sounds of marrow thought
number together as ever and ever comes

Is it really so brought up to date

You have to spit over your left shoulder if you see a magpie trip or waltz or stay within the boulder hemicycle to see where shadows will

Too many arches stuck conditions merely flattened dearly local and then a number of face off first recognition or limbs seniority also had a forked stick of my own turn

That finally detached and walked away trembling too even things kept moving to gag the breeze of influence in sun this time at the rivers rhyme the usual

Numbers expanded by adjectives hung from trees stop them after a few centuries archers struck shadow kitchens strange waltzes or unmarked generalities replaced by do you know where our letters

Continuing presidents empty gravy presumption and then a number architecturally buttering them beside each other with spaces in between to spit out of the shapes idea

CHARLES BERNSTEIN

BEYOND THE VALLEY OF THE SOPHIST

You don't get the sense
he has a lot to say; but he says it
very well. The search
which is a deference to the caving
walls of essential acts, potential facts. Circling
caustics in seas of suits. [I]
want a phone, a sea, a
curb; body parts impede essence. (Relation

Precedes production.) Athwart
knack (flagon). As homemade
bestiary enthrottles boheme. *Bruce*
is bruised by bluster (Buster). Fight
fire with water (warper). "This
is a powerful, original, and deeply
moving work and many will
find it a disturbing one."

When in falcon time and of a ripe
rage, I bloat a board, as ever
has accord in a day-long waft . . .
as or like may gird, sift, stultify,
perish, churl. Anyone blessed with
pumice. He said he had a mouse
in his hard disk. Then apoplectic, disappointed.

"I purely couldn't tell you, partly
couldn't consider, penultimately
unavoid[avail]able." Even Pope John Paul II
agrees. "I have read Professor Bell's

letter with amazement. In my review I said his research was fascinating and most skillfully presented. As for the misgivings I felt (and still

Feel), they were expressed in as considered a manner. . . .” Those things which I beheld as child — chair, table floor — concrete, that meant a life. Or blind to purloined recall, dodges for bull or Bill, only to inappropriately will. These china dolls, Moroccan scrawls: the cost of it all.

Retention that squanders its own demand, see-sawing and then fawning. “My ink is not good, my paper dirty, & I am altogether ashamed.” Standing, stunned; strutting, stunted. He who is lost hesitates and hesitating finds (but not what he looked for). She who meditates is tossed. Let geese

Be geese! (He does not care whose house he sets on fire as long as he can warm himself by the blaze.) There stands the hood, there the barking knife. *Take a scissors to write.* “She sure put a spook in my wheels!” Like two dogs with one prick. Nor cast your hose before gnomes; that is, skin them but don’t

Fleece them. For it's better to be led
by the nose than by the hairs, better
to be led by the nose than to have a lead
nose. Which is to say, he was
a hatchet without a handle, a pudding
in a puddle. What a muddle!
"I only say suppose this supposition," propose
this proposition. Not a tragedy, just an

Inconvenience. & don't be harsh without
a reason. (Just after she screams
she picks up her bottle & dreams.)
*Then we came upon a grand beech forest
Where once I lost my good friend Morris.*
Willingly, I'll say I've had enough. Wet
as a mule and twice as
disgusted. Take my husband,

Please! But the pleasures are entrusted
to the wrong partitions: the cant of
intellectual fashion (Paris) lies
a decade behind leather design (Milano). Harsh,
that is, without accuracy. For with Rehnquist
& Meese, the only ones with rights
are the unborn and the police. & reigning over all,
the Great Communicator — master of deceit. No release.

Heave, hoe this
firmament.
What is here
only that; no

less. The tide
pulls back its
brim — in which
we spin.

The prolonged hippopotami of the matter
swivel for their breakfasts, fall in the middle landing soft
with the horse shrill of honeysuckle, to the decimated
acid of the sweet
tub. They are hobbled, dejected
& lie frozen with salted humbling.
To the ocean of shorn horizon, averting America's
sentient emptiness, here where the body's sightless ascent
revolts in paltry recompense.

Obscurity beckons from down the block
oblivion, too, bids me come & knock.
The water calls me but I shall not go
for a man's place is on the sho'.
You can sing and you can pray & you can shout lots
but you'll never get to Heaven without a box.
Lox & bagels, bagels & lox, kreplach
is on the stove, time for a plate of hocks.

I'd ask that you call me by my Christian name, Buddy
(since I don't know your name, I hope you don't mind
my calling you that).
It's not a lot to ask; purely, it's a small thing
but I think it'd help to bond the cement between us
put us on indistinct terms, if you know what I mean.
What I want to bring across to you, Buddy

is the vanity of conceits
though you may call it what you please —

The story is told that a man came to a house noted for
its views
& was told, look to the West, at the mountain ranges that
loom over the land
& was told, look to the South, at the turquoise-blue lake
shimmering in the blue-bright sun
& was taken, then, to an Eastern balcony, overhanging
a garden unrivaled in its varieties of plants & flowers
& he looked to the North, at the thick-grown forest
& listened to the birds that filled the branches of the
cascading trees
& he was ushered to the Western windows
& he said, "But I've already seen that."

MARGARET MAYNARD

DEMI-

I hadn't seen Amanda in a year or two. At thirteen, she was still a child, awkward and timid. She wouldn't even talk to me, she just stood behind her father staring at me. I was a foot taller than she and in a different world. This was the house we had played in where her mother, Nina, had painted those gaudy French murals, and courted a Sheik, a man who never cut his hair which was wrapped in a turban. He carried a revolver and pulled it out of his jacket one night in a flash because he had walked into a clothesline. I mostly have an image of the little brother, Todd, and the German nannie, Elsie, who gave him enemas every night. Little blond Todd, his legs dangling over the side of the bed and his rear end exposed, with the nozzle of the enema bag thrust in and held by the severe Elsie. I had been fascinated by the enemas, horrified by the portent.

Nina and my mom were best friends. Amanda's father was not around much; he usually flew home in his helicopter, and we ran to meet it in the backyard. This was very exciting and considered extravagant by the old-money families of Westhampton Beach, but I couldn't ride in it, because Mom said he was an alcoholic.

There was Amanda's father, Alex, now with a blond friend. They were greeting me in the driveway by his garage of fancy cars. I looked for the old Rolls we used to ride in, Nina driving, with her black eyeliner and fake fanny pads. Amanda and I imagined we were bathing in a bathtub installed in the car, preparing for a party in New York while driving on the expressway.

We mimicked the glamour of Amanda's parents. Now they were divorced. I had gone crazy, but it had been a year and a half now, and my hallucinations weren't as bad as they had been. I couldn't tell Amanda these things.

I was fifteen, with the big body of a woman, and Amanda's father was looking at my body. I had noticed men doing this, and it made me feel embarrassed. I hardly noticed my body myself. It was a scary thing that I was stuck in, and my hands would shrivel up when I looked at them. They would wither up and shrink into claws till I had to hide them.

In the mirror, I was confronted. People told me that I was a beauty, but I only saw a garish effect staring back at myself. Sometimes my face withered or it looked like a comic book face with a big heart-shaped head, small knobbed nose, criss-crosses on my cheeks, and two V's upside down, over malignantly evil eyes. My mouth was only a meaningless opening, with pink ribbing around it. I was captive to my own eyes. Once under fluorescent light trapped in the bathroom of a movie theater for an hour, I was unable to break away from the evil stare.

Trying to enjoy the things that I loved. The water everywhere. The bay that lay behind the men standing at the driveway, the bay I had sailed across to the ocean with my father. My father who had died that month.

I'd just been raped two days ago, losing my virginity, while walking to the park from the hospital. And now, two men were looking at my body. Men had this weird quirk I thought. We went into the house and they made cocktails.

Memories of the living room. I had dressed up for Easter with Amanda. We had worn wreaths of flowers in our hair and white dresses hand-embroidered by nuns in Puerto Rico. We had Christmas there. Nina would give us glasses of sherry to warm us up on cold days, because she was French and had a beehive hairdo. Nina played sexy music on the phono while we looked at *Playboy* magazines and wondered about the glamour of women's bodies.

Shy, I generally blushed when stared at or spoken to, so instead of cocktails, I went upstairs to explore. The same rooms, the murals, Nina's boudoir, and then I saw the maid's quarters, the domain of Elsie, a forbidden sanctum. They were empty and quiet. They were simple. I was in a bedroom, a small room with a little cast-iron bed and vanity table. In the late afternoon, the room was pristine like Elsie, away from everyone.

Then someone approached, it was Alex's friend, the younger blond man. He was very handsome, tall and tan with classic features. He had his cocktail with the ice clinking.

"Here you are!" he said. "What are you doing? Would you care to have a drink?" He shut the door, smiling.

I said, "Just looking. . . No, thank you." It was a great labor for me to speak to people. He was coming towards me as I was backing away, ashamed, into a corner.

"You're beautiful," he said in a soft, thick voice. He had enclosed me with his muscular self and I could not budge him. I wasn't there. Down on the bed he leaned his stuff on me; his hands pulling my clothes off. I went catatonic. He rubbed and breathed gin with his damp blond head.

Men were like this. This is what happened.

He was smoother than the other one was a couple of days ago. This man washed over me like a wave where the other one had jerked at a wrong angle. They both hovered over me as if they had to vomit. Then they stopped. The semen smelled like warm chlorine.

Afterwards, lying there, he spoke of my great figure—mostly from the waist down. My breasts needed to get bigger he said. I never liked the things anyway and tried to ignore them. But now they had become a disgrace.

So, that was it.

GIL OTT

FROM *TRAFFIC*

Each nature
mines on the mud road into town

scattered petals, yellow, like a blood
canticle.

Without bias, nature yields rhetoric. Writers, musicians, none to be seen.

Question the horse with its belly out. Have you ever heard such a
fantastic story?

rain by the thatch
directed

by design, her eye following
her embroidery.

Guiding a knife, remembering the history of the knife.

by that car or by
the driver himself, fat
chance

to get up,
passing him, turning, keeping
distance.

Did I mention the breadth of the street itself, made white, emptied by
the light and heat? Sunday. Wearing Sunday clothes. Pity issues, little
more, tucked under a belly.

to themselves, the aging son
particularly, sullen
holiday. "Queer

white people
shoot and run

Attending, too few handles on the action. It is humility and respect. But
of the parent, torpor giving rise to crime.

JOAN RETALLACK

FROM *AFTERIMAGES*

Color Plate 25

Arising from the phenomenon of color adaptation are the effects of color contrast and the related phenomenon of afterimages. If we look steadily at a color, the eyes partly adapt to it and tend to see it as white. If we then look at another color, the condition of the eyes is such that they tend to subtract the first color from the second. That is, they tend to move the second color toward the complimentary of the first. This effect is local in the eye, so that if the first area has a strongly marked pattern, this pattern appears in the second area as an *after-image*. In *simultaneous contrast*, two adjacent colors move away from each other in hue if the eye looks back and forth from one to the other. In *successive contrast*, the colors are presented to the eye one after the other. See Color Plate 25.*

**The Harper Encyclopedia of Science*

recently in Paris *au courant*
 instant ignition
 to fall into naive realism
 again and a gain and again
 big talkers high livers fast steppers
 thick intransigent smile
 top-O-logical squeeze and stretch

.....

recently accommodating textures
 instant eloquence
 to fall into another lost art
 big celluloid queens
 high energy sources
 fast ice
 thick if you know what "I" mean
 top-O-logical daring/darling?

schwoop he's gone!
schwoop "he"'s gone!
schwoop he's "gone"!
etc.

SMAJ

Jelly Roll Morton
elegiac tendencies
permanent pleats

astro-turf

gone

Curiositas — Medieval sin
from *curo*, to care
St. Cuthbert: All' curyouste he refused

Geertz:

Apache jokes
English meals
African cult sermons
American high schools
Indian castes
Balinese widow burnings

On Being a Real Person by
Harry Emerson Fostick

man seated on other side of raw bar

jokes
meals
sermons
schools
castes
burnings

poet O the Land-O-Lakes District

Spitting Imagists

hard dry and photophobic

Lord and Lady Elgin and their watches

terrorists burning their toast in Winnipeg

perhaps this
is the
meaning of
EVIL

poet O

Miles-O-Smiles

from the

Shreveport Stomp

to the

Georgia Swing

you will read about it in the new physics

read about it
n th nw phscs

please machine give piece of chow

what is (are) the rhetoric(s) of dispassion?

thanatos, etc.

we will be working in teams

(his posthumous grape jokes)

creepinglogophilia

what

dispassion

post

humous

creeping

dispassion

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